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MANCHESTER COLLEGE,

OXFORD.

The Old Nonconformity and The Theory of the Church.

AN ADDRESS

DELIVERED BY

REV. J. E. ODGERS, M.A.

(THE HIBBERT LECTURER),

ON THE

OPENING OF THE MICHAELMAS TERM,

1895.

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THE OLD NONCONFORMITY AND THE THEORY OF THE CHURCH.*

When I received the honour of being appointed Hibbert Lecturer in Ecclesiastical History, the wish was expressed, on the part of the Hibbert Trustees, that I should pay particular attention to the religious history of England, and especially to the historical development of the principles of Liberal Nonconformity. No intimation could have been more congenial to my own mind or my own predilections. And though the necessity of preparing lectures on early and general Church-history has hitherto prevented me—and may still, though I trust in lessening proportion, prevent me—from doing much original work on this special line,—I take this opportunity of laying before you a few points of interest in connexion with earlier stages of that Nonconformity out of which the history of this College, and of many churches of kindred origin and parallel development, takes its rise. And in speaking of the Theory of the Church, it is obvious that I am dealing with a matter which is vitally connected with questions of Toleration, Comprehension, terms of Fellowship, terms of Communion; but which stands behind all these, and has much to do in each case with shaping the question and determining the answer.

I do not wish to commit you to a Tercentenary celebration; but the year 1595 happens to furnish a very convenient "specular mount" for retrospect and prospect. In that year there appeared a little book which gathers up the arguments on both sides of a

* A Lecture delivered in Manchester College at the Opening of Michaelmas Term, October 15th, 1895.

question which had been disturbing the Puritan mind of England for the past thirteen years. It is entitled, *A treatise of the Ministry of the Church of England. Wherein is handled this question, whether it is to be separated from, or joined unto. Which is discussed in two letters, the one written for it, the other against it. Whereunto is annexed after the Preface a brief declaration of the ordinary officers of the Church of Christ.* The preface sufficiently explains the origin of the book. A lady, whose name is disguised as "Mtris N.," had been imprisoned because "she would not joyne with the publik ministerie of England in the worship of God" was strongly advised to submit her scruples to the judgment of a minister, Mr. A. H., which she did in the form of the following syllogism:—

"Whosoever he be that dealeth with the holy things of God and worketh upon the consciences of men by virtue of an Antichristian power office and calling, him the people of God ought not to receyv or joyne themselves unto. 2 Thess. 2, 4—10.

"But all the ministers that stand over the Church's assemblyes in England deal with the holy thinges of God and work upon men's consciences by virtue of Antichristian power office or calling.

"Therefore the people of God ought not to receyv them and joyne themselves unto them."

Mr. A. H. replied in a very moderate letter dissuading from separation; of his arguments the following is a sufficient sample:

"Although divers corruptions remain in our church, which were derived to us from the Papists (the least whereof I would not take upon me to defend), yet are they not of that nature that can make us an Anti-Christian Church. No Anti-Christ is sound in doctrine. Whosoever believeth in his heart and confesseth with his mouth, &c., is a true member of the Church and founded upon a rock, against which the gates of hell shall not prevail . . . if our assemblys be built upon the rock, how

can you deny them to be true churches?" Mrs. N., unconvinced, carried her question and Mr. A. H's. reply to Mr. Fr. Jo., a Separatist minister, who being at that time a prisoner in the Clink, had ample leisure to devote himself to the support of the lady's syllogism. And he found means to get into the printer's hands the book I have named; a glance reveals *which* side committed the correspondence to the press. Mr. A. H.'s letter is dismembered, and appears a few lines at a time, in a tiny faint Roman type, engulfed in pages of refutation which exhibit the solid majesty of black letter.

But who were the two men whose opinions were thus strangely brought into contrast in this little book?

Mr. *A. H.* is Arthur Hildersam, a man of good family—indeed on his mother's side of royal descent (she was a niece of Cardinal Pole), and Queen Elizabeth, it is said, was accustomed to address this much respected divine as "Cousin Hildersam." He had been instituted in 1593 to the vicarage of Ashby-de-la-Zouche, among a Puritan people who, no doubt, preserved the influence of Anthony Gilby, long their vicar. He had already been lecturer in the parish, and had already felt the weight of ecclesiastical censure. Testimony to his high personal character reaches us from every quarter; but Wm. Lilly, the astrologer, who had been a schoolboy at Ashby, states his case succinctly:—"He was an excellent textuary, of exemplary life, pleasant in discourse, a strong enemy to the Brownists, and dissented not from the Church of England in any article of faith, but only about wearing the surplice, baptizing with the cross, and kneeling at the sacrament."* Here is a brief summary of what his Nonconformity entailed. From his institution to the end of Elizabeth's reign he was three times proceeded against by the High Commission Court. In 1605 he was silenced for three years; 1611, again silenced by the bishop; 1612, suspended by High Commission

* *Mr. William Lilly's History of his Life and Times*, 1715. pp. 4, 5.

Court; 1613, imprisoned three months for refusing the *ex-officio* oath; 1614, again before the Court as a schismatic, chiefly on the allegation that he refused to receive the communion kneeling, imprisoned in the Fleet and in the King's Bench; 1616, sentenced to be imprisoned, degraded from the ministry, fined £2,000.; 1625, under the lenient primacy of Abbot, he is allowed to return to Ashby; 1630, again suspended for not wearing the surplice; 1632, he died. This is the record of a Puritan within the Church—the "strong enemy" of the Separatists, who maintains that neither the presence of corruptions, which are at once removable by authority, nor the wrong judgment of the official person who endeavours to make essentials of things which Christ has left indifferent, can justify schism or make the parish churches of England Anti-Christian. At the very time when he was in hiding from the pursuivants of the High Commission Court, he declined an invitation to the ministry of the Separatist Church at Leyden, where he would have been safe from persecution.

Mr. *Fr. Jo.* is Francis Johnson, a man of about the same age as Hildersam, member of the same college (Christ's, Cambridge, of which he became Fellow). While resident in the University, he embraced the theoretical Presbyterianism which was current there, *i.e.*, the abstract doctrine of the "parity of ministers:" based on the allegation that *bishop* and *elder* are, in the New Testament, convertible terms, and stand for the same thing; or if not exactly so, that elders who rule and elders who teach are of the same order. Johnson expounded this view in a sermon, of which the text was 1 Pet. 5, 1—4, beginning "The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder," &c. This was preached 6th January, 1588.* On 9th February Richard Bancroft, then chaplain to Archbishop Whitgift, preached, at Paul's Cross, his epoch-making sermon on the supremacy of bishops, of which

* According to modern reckoning, both January and February, 1588, would be in 1589.

I shall have to speak presently. But this was not the only official reply to Johnson. Argument with the masters of legions was particularly unsafe in the days of Elizabeth and Whitgift. He was imprisoned, ordered to recant, expelled from the University, imprisoned again for not leaving at once. When liberated, he went to Middelburg in Zeeland, to be chaplain to a congregation of English merchants, to whom Thomas Cartwright, the leader of the Disciplinarian Presbyterians, had formerly ministered. Being, like Hildersam, a strong opponent of the Brownists, or Separatists, he spied upon the Dutch printing offices where the books of this party were printed for conveyance to England. "He was made," we are told, "the ambassador's instrument to intercept them at the press," and was the means whereby many of the entire impressions were seized and burned. A copy of one of these books, which he kept for his own perusal, converted him to the necessity of separation, and the Brownist theory of the Church. The book was one by Barrowe and Greenwood, in reply to a work written against them by George Gifford, minister of Maldon, Essex (a Nonconformist, and a sufferer for Nonconformity within the Church), who had called Barrowe and Greenwood, on his title page, "the chief ringleaders of our Donatists in England." [Lond., 1591.] Johnson laid down his chaplaincy at Middelburg, returned to London, sought out Barrowe, then a prisoner in the Fleet, and joined himself to the little company who, in 1592, organised the first congregational church in London of which anything very definite is known, Johnson being the Pastor and Greenwood the Teacher, with two Elders and two Deacons. Within a few months, Johnson and Greenwood were arrested, and, soon after, fifty-six members of their church, meeting "in the woods at Islington," followed them to prison. The next year, 1593, saw the atrocious judicial murders of Barrowe, Greenwood, and Penry, and the flight to Holland of the remnant of the church, Johnson remaining in prison for the next four

years. Thence, as I have said, he issued the volume of 1595, which has furnished my text. We must, for a moment, leave him there, contemplating his next production, *A True Confession of the Faith, and humble acknowledgment of the Alegeance which wee hir Majesties subjects, falsely called Brownists doe houlde towards God and yeild to hir Majestie.* Mr. Hildersam we leave in the temporary quiet of his Ashby vicarage, perhaps already projecting that course of 252 lectures on the 51st Psalm which was published after his death. Let us look at a few of the antecedent stages of that divergence of thought which they exemplify.

On the accession of Queen Elizabeth, the great majority of the English people were, of course, Romanists. But the religious changes indicated by the Act of Supremacy, and the provisional restoration of the Second Prayer-book of Edward VI., produced much less disturbance throughout the country than one would have expected. Apparently, only 80 of the parochial clergy refused to comply. And when the Commissioners, charged with enforcing the Queen's injunctions of 1559, had made their visitations, only 243 of the ecclesiastical preferments of England (estimated by Camden at 9,400) were declared vacant; and this list includes the higher dignities of the Church, headships of colleges, and prebends. Of the laity, we know that a large number of sincere Catholics conformed until 1570, the date of the Pope's Bull against Elizabeth; but with the great majority there must have been a spiritless compliance, under the pains and penalties of the Act of Uniformity, and little more. Over against the inertia of this great mass, is to be set the earnest reforming spirit of the returned exiles, the Edwardian Protestants, who had found shelter with the Reformed Churches of the continent during the Marian persecution. They had come back, burning with evangelical zeal, to protestantize the England of Philip and Mary. Many of them were promoted at once to

vacant sees. The new bishops believed that the shaping of the future church of the nation was in their hands. They exhibit minor differences of predilection and temperament. Cox, of Ely, and Horne, of Winchester, were most in favour of ritual uniformity; Pilkington, of Durham, and Parkhurst, of Norwich, most tolerant of divergence. Midway between them we may place Sandys, of Worcester, Jewel, of Salisbury, and Grindal, of London. But all alike seem to have believed that Elizabeth's "settlement of the Church" (as it is called) was only a temporary and politic expedient, not a serious arrest of Reformation. Their correspondence shows them at first rather sarcastic about the Queen's "lukewarmness"; rather disdainful about the fuss made over "the scenic apparatus of divine worship," as Jewel calls it—"as if the Christian religion could not exist without something tawdry;"* irritated at inquisitions about the wearing of cap and surplice; but comforting themselves that the cause of religion is on the whole advancing. "Only the popish vestments remain in our Church," writes Sandys, "which we hope will not last long."† But soon we detect a sadder note. The Queen was convinced that the way to internal union lay through external uniformity. The "reserve of power to the Queen," stipulated in the Act of Supremacy, left all initiative in her hands, and she jealously guarded her privilege against the bishops and against Parliament. The bishops are called upon to enforce articles, sent down by Archbishop Parker, which they had never approved; or to stand by and see their most active clergy harried by the High Commission Court. "It is lamentable to behold," writes Bishop Pilkington, "and dreadful to hear of such things taking place amongst those who profess the same religion; and yet the entire blame is laid upon the bishops, as if they alone, if they chose, were able to eradicate all these evils. We endure, I must confess, many things against our inclinations,

* *Zürich Letters* I., p. 23. † Ibid, p. 74.

and groan under them, which if we wished ever so much, no entreaty can remove. We are under authority, and cannot make any innovation without the sanction of the Queen, or abrogate anything without the authority of the laws; and the only alternative now allowed us is, whether we will bear with these things, or disturb the peace of the Church."* Grindal and Horne also face the question of going out; they decide that to abandon their offices would be to open the door to a papistical ministry; "our enemies would take possession of the places deserted by ourselves." They finally decide against it, with the sorrowful plea, "Now we are brought into such straits, what is to be done but that, since we cannot do what we would, we should do, in the Lord, what we can?"†

I must not go into any further notice of the Vestiarian controversy, which placed these bishops in the distasteful position of persecutors, and inflicted such constant grievance upon the party of further reformation. But a great deal more turned upon it than we should be apt to suppose. We are assured on both sides that there was no underlying or suspected difference as to doctrine—and it may seem trivial to us that earnest and devoted men should have entertained such obstinate scruples about a square cap and a surplice. But to the Protestant of the time it seemed not merely tyrannical to enforce the wearing of these things; it was not merely a matter in which obedience to the prince entailed some compromise of principle—though that compromise seemed to involve the endorsement of a policy of keeping as near to Rome as possible—of deluding the uneducated by minimising the differences between Catholic and Protestant worship, and making light of the testimony which, within recent memory, the Marian martyrs had sealed in blood and flame. "The conjuring garments of the Pope's church" represented to these men a whole theory of religion which was not theirs. The

* Ibid, pp. 287-8. † Ibid, p. 177.

contemporary literature shows that this controversy turned attention to much larger questions than that of an expedient uniformity—questions concerning the true nature of a Christian church and of a Christian ministry, and of the ultimate authority in religion which the Christian man should recognise, involving the whole re-arrangement of associations and operations in the light of the principle, "One is your master, even Christ." And I would illustrate this by allusion to one episode only in this period. In 1567, thirty-seven of the London clergy who had refused to wear the vestments were deprived. Their congregations, who strongly sympathised with them, did not attend the ministry of their conforming successors. It was suspected that they held private meetings. The Queen directed special search to be made for these conventicles, and, in fact, invented a new penalty, whereby a citizen so taken incurred the loss of the freedom of the city. A meeting was discovered on June 19th, at Plumbers' Hall, which had been hired on the pretext of a wedding party. This was apparently a mere pretext, suggested by the hall-keeper (for, of course, the guild would not have let their hall for a conventicle). I do not share the glee with which a recent Anglican critic pounces upon the fact that "this early congregational church ..... was gathered together upon a lie."* I await evidence that the Plumbers' Hall gathering has anything to do with English Congregationalism.† I cannot find sufficient justification for the assumption that it represents the early and obscure congregation connected with the name of Richard Fitz; or that it is continuous with the "hidden church" of Queen Mary's days. The account which the prisoners gave of themselves before Grindal, bishop of London, the Lord Mayor, and other Commissioners, appears to be perfectly simple and truthful.

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* *The Church Quarterly Review*, July, 1893, p. 469.

† See Note *A* at end.

John Smith was called upon by Grindal to answer for the rest, as he appeared the "ancientest." He said—

"So long as we might have the worde freely preached and the sacramentes administred without the preferring of idolatrous gear above it, we never assembled togither in houses. But when it came to this poynt that all our preachers were displaced by your lawe who would not subscribe to your apparaile and your lawe, so that we could not heare none of them in anie church by the space of seaven or eight wekes, except Father Coverdale, of whom we have a good opinion, and yet God knoweth the man was so fearfull that he durst not be knowne unto us where he preached, though we sought it at his house; and when we were troubled and commaunded to your courts from day to day for not comming to our parishe churches; then we bethought us what were best to doe, and we remembred that there was a congregation of us in this citie in Queene Maries dayes, and a congregation at Geneva, which used a booke and order of preaching, ministring of the sacramentes and discipline, most agreeable to the worde of God; which booke is allowed by that godly and well-learned man, Maister Calvin, and the preachers there, which booke and order we nowe holde. And if you can reproove this booke, or aniething that we holde by the worde of God, we will yielde to you and doe open penaunce at Paules Crosse; but if not, we will stand to it by the grace of God."* In a long and patient examination, the bishop and the Lord Mayor endeavoured to persuade the accused to conformity, but in vain. Twenty-four men and seven women were sent to prison, where they remained nearly two years. From the particulars of the examination the following points emerge pretty clearly:—

1. We have here an *intention* to extend the action of churches by the establishment within them of *discipline*. The accused name it as a shortcoming of the Edwardian Reformation that

* *A parte of a register*, &c., p. 24.

"no discipline according to the word of God was brought into the Church." We have no indication of the institution of an eldership, or the gradation of church-offices usually associated with such discipline; and no indication of the idea of membership proper to a *gathered* or *covenanted* church. The organisation of discipline was the starting point of Disciplinarian Puritanism, or Presbyterianism within the Church.

2. Though the accused are not backward in loyal expression with regard to the Queen and Council, it is evident that they regard the enforcement of regulations for worship by the civil power as an infringement of the headship of Christ in his Church. There is no suggestion, from the lips of any of the ecclesiastics on the bench, of any authority as to the things objected to, save "the authority of the prince;" not one of them has a word to say about an authority as to rites and ceremonies possessed by the Church itself. Exactly where the Anglican theory of the Church would at once suggest itself in these days, it is conspicuous by its absence. For example:—

"*White:* We wilbe tryed by the worde of God, which shall judge us all at the last day.

Dean (Goodman): But who will you have to be the judge of the worde of God?

Hawkins: Why that was the sayinge of the Papistes in Queene Marie's time. I have hearde, when the trueth was defended by the worde of God, then they would saye "Who shall judge of the worde of God?" The *Catholike Church* must be judge. . . . .

Dean: We have a gracious prince.

We saide, God preserve hir grace, and the Counsaile." *

One cannot wonder after this that in the thought of the *headship of Christ* there seemed to be found the secret of a perfect law of liberty. The application of this appears in another passage:—

* Ibid, p. 35.

"*Hawkins:* You preach Christ to be Prieste and Prophete, but you preache him not to be King; neither will you suffer him to raigne with the sceptre of his worde in his church alone; but the *Pope's cannon lawe,* and the *will of the Prince,* must have the first place, and be preferred before the worde and ordinance of Christ."

This conception of Christ as prophet, priest, and king takes its place at once among the fundamentals of the Separatist declarations, *e.g.,* in the *True Description* of 1589 (probably the earliest Brownist manifesto, a 4to sheet, printed at Dort, and the work of Barrowe and Greenwood), and in that of 1596, the Amsterdam *True Confession.* The Presbyterians also adopted it as the basis of their characteristic doctrine of the equality of all ministers under Christ.

3. The third point that emerges from the record of this extraordinary examination is remarkable for its permanent validity. The bishops had persuaded themselves (with the comforting support of Bullinger and others of their foreign correspondents) that vestments and ceremonies were things in their nature indifferent; and "therefore you should accept them." "Nay," said the Puritan Nonconformist, like Hildersam and Gifford, and, in the after years, Baxter, "we cannot accept them, but we cannot separate ourselves from the Church of Christ because of them. But on your plea that they are indifferent, they cannot be enforced, for no human power can make essential that which Christ has left indifferent." Grindal, with great frankness, puts forth the theory which he and his colleagues had accepted:

"*Bishop.* In deede it is true in effect, that the Prince should and must obey the worde of God onely. But I will shewe you this consisteth in three points. The first is, that which God commandeth is not to be left undone. The seconde is, that which God forbiddeth, may not be done. And the thirde consisteth in things which God neyther commandeth nor forbiddeth,

and they are of the middle sorte, and are thinges *indifferent:* and such thinges Princes have authoritie to order, and to commaunde. . . . . Things not forbidden of God may be used for order and obedience sake."

To which, after a space, Hawkins replies:—"I beseeche you to let me answere your Lordship before all your wisdomes: *Philip Melancthon* writing upon the 14. chapter to the *Romans,* hath these wordes: When the opinion of *holines,* of *merite,* or *necessitie,* is put unto things indifferent, then they darken the light of the Gospell, and ought by all means to be taken away.

Bishop. It is not commaunded of necessitie in the Church, or in heavenly things.

Hawkins. You have made it a matter of necessitie in the Church, and that many a poore man doeth feele."*

He was thinking, no doubt, of those thirty-seven ministers in prison, who had the year before put forth from their confinement a brave little book (which you may read in the Bodleian): *A declaration of the doings of those ministers of God's word and sacraments, in the citie of London, which have refused to weare the outwarde apparell and ministering garments of the Pope's Church.*† Accurately anticipating Grindal's statement, they reply:—"The things we refuse are such as God hath neither commanded nor forbidden; *and the prince can only command them so.* If the prince should take in hand to command us to do what God hath not commanded, we must refuse and bear the penalty. We obey God, and we also obey man in submitting ourselves to suffer at his hands." The maintenance of this principle is continuous in the history of English Nonconformity. It was in the minds of the ejected of 1662 as it was on the lips of the prisoners of 1566. It is alleged by those who in the last century defended the Presbyterian Dissenters from the charge of wilful and schismatical

* Ibid, pp. 28, 32.

† There is a fair summary of this interesting tract in Strype: *Annals* I., ii., p. 163.

dissidence: "The things which Scripture makes indifferent can never be anything else; and it is presumptuous, in this sphere, to close the doors of Christ's Church against any by human legislation." This is the contention alike of Calamy's *Defence of Moderate Nonconformity* of 1703, and of Chandler's *Case of Subscription, calmly and impartially reviewed*, of 1748.

If, as I have said, this last point may be taken as the continuous justification of English Nonconformity, so may the two former be regarded as of the very essence of Puritanism, underlying both the Presbyterian and the Separatist developments of it. Thousands of the clergy throughout the country felt impatient at being condemned to acquiesce, obey, subscribe—to royal injunctions and episcopal articles—to fall in merely with the Queen's policy of waiting; they had a prayer-book to read, and the layman was bound to come and hear it under a penalty of 12d. for each Sunday of non-attendance. The less preaching the better, in the Queen's view; she thought the occasional reading of one of the printed homilies quite sufficient; and it was complained that in many parishes there was no sermon from one end of the year to the other. There was no doctrinal standard; the revised Articles had been approved by convocation, and by Parliament, but the Queen "would not suffer these things to be ordered by Parliament"—she considered them to belong to "her majesty's royal authority of supremacy of the Church of England."* The Articles remained thus in abeyance from 1562 to 1571. But the year 1571 saw the first organised efforts on the part of the Puritans to deal with the needs they felt, in the matters of preaching and of discipline. "Discipline" represents the effort to make "the Church" a reality in the parish, and co-extensive with it. Neal† gives us the earliest example of "Regulations for worship and discipline" put forth in this year by the ministers

* Hardwick: *History of the Articles*, p. 149.

† *History of the Puritans*, I., p. 273.

of Northampton, with the sanction of the Bishop of the Diocese (Scambler, of Peterborough), the Mayor of the town, and the Justices of the county. The rules refer to Sunday sermons, week-day lectures, catechising, and visitation. There is no creation of a new organisation, no recognition of any official person beyond the minister and churchwardens. Closely connected with this experiment was the setting up, also, first at Northampton, of the religious exercises called *Prophesyings*, which were stated meetings of ministers, with some public preaching, and much private exposition and discussion for the purpose of encouraging and cultivating the practise of preaching. These associations extended into ten counties, with the countenance of the Bishops, who appointed the moderators. They flourished till 1580, when the Queen commanded their suppression. Grindal, then primate, sent her a dignified remonstrance. He testified to the good they had done. "I know," he said, "that where there were not three able preachers, there are now thirty fit to preach at Paul's Cross, and forty or fifty besides able to instruct their own cures." An insulting letter from the Queen was followed by his firm refusal to proceed in the matter. He was suspended from his office, confined as prisoner in his house, and died in disgrace. And the Prophesyings were put down.

The Bill which enforced subscription to the Thirty-nine Articles (entitled "For the Ministers of the Church to be of sound religion"), which received the Queen's unwilling assent April 29th, 1571,—and particularly the conduct of certain members of the House of Commons with regard to it,—seems to have raised in the minds of the Puritans a hope of Parliamentary action in the direction of further Reformation. This hope was not altogether vain, for two Bills dealing with rites and ceremonies were introduced in the next Session, and passed the Commons; but the Queen demanded that they should be delivered up to her, and we hear of them no more. Field and Wilcocks

addressed *An Admonition to Parliament* (1571), which was followed (upon the imprisonment of the two writers) by *A Second Admonition* from the pen of Thomas Cartwright, who thenceforth became the leader of the Disciplinarian party, and was by this writing committed to a long controversy with Whitgift, afterwards Archbishop, then also at Cambridge. The first *Admonition* is largely devoted to the pointing out of abuses still requiring remedy; but it goes a long way in insisting upon the enforcement of discipline, and this in a manner which involves considerable revision of parochial organisation, both in theory and in practice. After setting forth that there are three outward marks of the Church,—preaching, administration of the sacraments and ecclesiastical discipline—the authors admit that the doctrine generally preached is, in substance, sound and good, but come at once to their first point of objection—that "the ministers are not, according to God's word, proved, elected, called, or ordained." Institution to the ministry is effected by powers and means wholly external to the people who are to be ministered unto. Advowsons are obtained by money or favour. "The bishops make 60, 80, or 100 (ministers) at a clap, and send them about into the country like masterless men." "Ecclesiastical Discipline is an order left by God unto his Church, whereby men learn to frame their wills and doings according to the law of God, by instructing and admonishing one another, yea, and by correcting and punishing all wilful persons and contemners of the same." The officers that have to deal with this charge are chiefly three—Ministers, preachers or pastors; Seniors or Elders; and Deacons. "You (that is, Parliament) have to plant in every congregation a lawful and godly signiory."

Cartwright, in the *Second Admonition*, is more explicit as to the grounds of the changes he advocates. "Whereas our Church yet misseth of the right course of the Scriptures in our reformation, let your learned men be driven to draw a platform out of

God's booke (where it is described at full), according to his will in the same revealed, and the examples of the best Churches beyond the seas, as Geneva, France, &c." He demands that "ministers be chosen by consent of the parish, and there tarry." And he carries us beyond the disciplinary organisation of the single parish. Each is to have its own consistory (or church council); the consistories of adjacent parishes are to be represented in conferences; and these again in provincial synods.

In this same year, 1572, it was resolved to put some part of this theory into practice—to give a kind of object-lesson in the proposed parochial disciplinary organisation. A presbytery was inaugurated in the parish of Wandsworth, Mr. Field, lecturer of that place, Mr. Wilcocks (the two authors of the *Admonition*), several more clergy, and "a number of very considerable laymen"* being present. "Eleven Elders were chosen and their offices described in a Register entitled the Orders of Wandsworth." Probably this number included Ministers, Elders specially so called, and Deacons: the officers of the Church, constituting the Consistory or Presbytery of the parish, being collectively called the Elders. Unfortunately, we know no more—no document which can be assumed to be, or to represent, the Wandsworth Orders—not even how long the organisation was maintained. Neal intimates that the example was followed, and presbyteries set up, in the adjacent counties; but he alleges no instance, and I do not know that anybody has done so.†

In 1644, when the matter of a Presbyterian Establishment was before Parliament and the Westminster Assembly, there was printed "by authority" (it is said, for the use of those bodies) a little tractate of 22 pages, entitled *A Directory of Church Government, anciently contended for, and, as far as the times would suffer, practised by the first Nonconformists in the days of Queen Elizabeth. Found in the study of the most accom-*

* Neal I. 301.

† See Note *B*, at end.

plished divine Mr. Thomas Cartwright, after his decease; and reserved to be published for such a time as this. Dr. M'Crie * pronounced this little book to be "unquestionably the Order of Wandsworth." But a comparison of this Directory with the Admonitions of 1571-2 will, I think, convince anyone that it belongs to a later stage in the development of Presbyterian theory—the stage, I am disposed to think, marked by the action of a large number of ministers throughout the country in the year 1586. These early stages of theoretical Presbyterianism are concerned with the discipline of particular parishes rather than with any scheme of association or federal government of churches. While it is maintained that the Bishop of the New Testament is pastor of one church, there is little direct attack upon Diocesan Episcopacy. A statement that the authority of a Presbytery is set up as a substitute for the authority of the Episcopate would be absolutely false. The seat of authority is *almost* entirely vested in the officers of the particular church. Conferences and Synods (which existed only on paper) are to be consultative and advising bodies. There is an evident desire not to put the word *Presbytery* in the forefront; when it is used, it is used as an alias for the parochial consistory, which is often explained to be "as it were a Senate of Elders." This latter term is constantly derided in the controversial writings of Bancroft (afterwards Archbishop). "The seekers of the pretended Discipline are not yet agreed what name they should give unto their Hierarchicall parish-meetings . . . . By hook or crook it must be a Senate, which tickleth and pleaseth some of our reformers, insomuch as in their Latin discourses of Discipline there is little but Senate and Senatours."† Bancroft consequently delights to allude to the Elders as Aldermen. Mr. Hunt goes so far as to say, "It is not evident that government by presby-

* *Annals of English Presbytery*, p. 131.

† *A Survey of the Pretended Holy Discipline.* 1593. pp. 88, 95.

teries was a necessary part of 'the Discipline.'" (He is speaking here of *Synodical* government.) "In Travers's treatise, which was the authorised exposition, they are not even mentioned." *

Now although, as I have said, it is perhaps impossible to allege accurate examples of the setting up in other places of the Discipline of the Wandsworth type (the strongest evidence of its survival being found in the pages of its keenest opponent, Bancroft†), one other part of the scheme became a reality, in an almost accidental fashion. The Prophesyings assumed more and more the character of *Classes* or Conferences; and when these were suppressed, in 1580, and even the gathering of six or seven neighbouring ministers for fast day services forbidden,‡ it seems evident that associations of the Puritan clergy were secretly maintained. Their demands for relief from persecution, and for measures of further reformation, became more definite and audible. Under the bitter persecution of Whitgift, no less than three Bills setting forth these demands were brought into Parliament. The first of these embodied the heads of a Petition, which not only asked for relief from the proceedings of the Archbishop and the Court of High Commission, and the tyranny of the *ex officio* oath, but prayed the House to take steps for the increase of the number of preachers in the country; it was accompanied by tabulated returns,§ showing that there were still 8,000 parishes without preaching ministers. The preparation of such returns proves at least some organisation or concerted action. The Queen would not allow the Bill to be read; she sent for the Bill and the petition, and committed to the Tower Sir Peter Wentworth and other speakers in its favour. The Puritans, we are told by their historian,‖ "came to this conclu-

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* *Religious Thought in England.* I. p. 214.

† *Daungerous Positions, &c.* 1593. p. 73. Compare Neal I., pp. 334—7.

‡ Heylyn: *Aerius Redivivus.* p. 286.

§ A specimen-page is given in Neal I. p. 487. ‖ Neal I. p. 483.

sion: that since the Magistrate could not be induced to reform the Discipline of the Church, by so many petitions and supplications, that therefore, after so many years' waiting, it was lawful to act without him, and introduce a reformation in the best manner they could." . . . . . "*The Holy Discipline of the Church described in the word of God* being revised, was subscribed" by the Clergy, to the number of 500, in their "private classes." Now, is that document which was found in Cartwright's study, and was reprinted by authority in 1644, the book that was subscribed in 1586? I think this very likely; or, if not, that in some tentative and intermediate form, it represents that book; especially as it ends with a form of subscription beginning, "The brethren of the Conference of N whose names are hereunder written have subscribed this discipline, &c.," which agrees well with what has been quoted as to the signing of the document in "their private classes." *

This new confederation marks a period of more aggressive action on the part of what was now called the *Disciplinarian* or *Consistorian* party—shown in a root-and-branch Bill of the most impolitic sort, introduced into Parliament the next year, 1587. The reply is to be found in Whitgift's new visitation articles, wherein churchwardens were required to inform against their ministers; in Bancroft's vituperation; in fresh Star Chamber and High Commission persecution, which reached its most absurd and tragic height in the fate of John Udal, author of the *Demonstration of Discipline*, who was sentenced to death for high treason, on the ground that to speak evil of bishops is to defame the Queen's officers, which is to defame the Queen. James of Scotland wrote to Elizabeth on Udal's behalf, but in vain. He eluded the hangman, however, by dying in prison.

The controversy between Cartwright and Whitgift, which began with the former's *Second Admonition*, of 1572, closed in

* See Note *C* at end.

1577 with *The rest of the Second Reply of Thos. Cartwright.** But in the middle of this period, the Court of High Commission issued a warrant for his apprehension, and he fled to the Channel Islands. The Protestantism of these islands had been strongly recruited by French refugees, who had fled thither after the Massacre of St. Bartholomew; there had been no "settlement of the Church" by law since the islands had ceased to form part of the See of Coutances. Cartwright and a Puritan of like mind, Edward Snape, settled apparently as parish ministers in Guernsey and Jersey respectively, and were invited by the clergy of the islands to assist in framing a Discipline for the Churches. The scheme they submitted was discussed and revised by the representatives of the churches, and approved and authorised by the civil magistracy. So here we have, in 1577, a Presbyterian polity actually working, and actually "established." According to Neal, the original print contained the words "confirmed by the authority and in the presence of the Governors of the same isles." The reprint of 1642 (in the Bodleian) bears the following title:—*The Orders for Ecclesiasticall Discipline, according to that which hath been practised since the Reformation of the Church in his Majesties dominions by the Auncient Ministers, Elders and Deacons of the Isles of Garnsey, Gersey, Spark and Alderny. Confirmed by the authority of the Synod of the foresaid Iles.* One or two points strongly illustrative of the Cartwrightian position meet us at once. The first section states that the Church is "the company of the faithful," *i.e.*, not only "those that have public charge," but the rest also. This is curious because the Presbyterian (to use this convenient term is to anticipate; there is no mention of presbyter or presbytery in the documents before us) does not usually say anything about the church and its

* It is strange that Fuller (*Church History*, Book X., iii., 6, 7) and Walton (*Life of Hooker*) represent Cartwright as making no reply to Whitgift's *Defense of the Answere*, and allege reasons for his silence!

membership; he takes for granted the existing parish; while the Separatist has to explain at the outset that his church is something quite different. But this sentence is not intended as a definition; its point is to premise that the term Church will be hereinafter used not for the ministry or eldership, but for the whole congregation. The equality of churches, and the equality of church-officers (save in the honour due to age and gifts), are explicitly stated. "No church ought to pretend any superioritie or dominion over another, for all are equal in power, having one onely head, Jesus Christ. The leaders of the church, where the magistrates are faithfull, are the faithfull magistrates which have the civill government, and the pastors and such as watch over the flock, which have the spirituall administration. These two governments are established by the ordinance of God, as necessary to the leading and upholding of his church in good order. . . . These two governments are so united that there should be no confusion of them, and so separated that there should be no contrarietie. . . . The magistrate is not only to punish sins of the second table, but of the first, as blasphemy and idolatry." (This Calvinian alliance of Church and State was another cause of division in the Puritan camp, the original Brownist utterly rejecting it.) Then follow the officers, viz.: Ministers; Doctors of Divinity—for the office of Teacher is here thus dignified; Elders; and Deacons; with "promises particular to each office." Then we have Ecclesiastical Assemblies in the following gradation:— The Consistory, which is the assembly of ministers and elders of every church, meeting every Sunday; the Colloque, which is the assembly of the ministers and ancients deputed by the Consistory of every church in each of the islands, meeting four times a year; the Synod, which is the assembly of ministers and elders deputed by the Colloques, meeting once every two years. This is, I believe, almost identical with the present organisation of the Reformed Church of France.

In his controversy with Whitgift, Cartwright had carried to an extreme length the contention that the "platforme of church-government" is described in full in the word of God, that the legislation of Scripture on the subject is final, and that no neutral zone is left for local and temporal adaptation to circumstances. He turns the historical statements that there were elders in Ephesus and deacons in Jerusalem into divine directions that there must be such officers in every parish in England, by a high *à priori* method. If God expressly ordained the minutest details of the Jewish Tabernacle, much more *must* he have specified the essential offices of the Christian Church. "Should he who there remembered the pins, here forget the master-builders? . . . . Could he there make mention of snuffers to purge the lights, and here pass by the lights themselves?" It is pleasant to turn from such special pleading as this to passages in which he deals with the main points of the Puritan conception of the Church. One of these is at once illustrative of the Channel Islands Directory, and of the relation of that "headship of Christ" to which the Plumbers' Hall prisoners appealed, to the working theory of the Church. "The Church is governed with that kind of government which the philosophers that write of the best commonwealth affirm to be best. For in respect of Christ, the head, it is a monarchy; and in respect of the ancients and pastors, that govern in common, and with like authority among themselves, it is an aristocracy, or the rule of the best men; and in respect that the people are not secluded, but have their interest in church-matters, it is a democracy, or popular estate." *

Whitgift's reply is entirely on the lines of that statement of the extent of church-authority which appeared in Article XX. of 1571, prefixed to the Edwardian Article which had dealt only with its limitation.† "The Church hath power to decree rites or ceremonies, and authority in controversies of faith." This

* *Replye* (1573), p. 51. †See Note *D* at end.

means to Whitgift that, even supposing the condition of the Church in the apostolic age to have been uniformly and exactly what Cartwright maintains it was—and he does not admit that this can be proved—this is not, therefore, to be construed into a rule for all time. It does not follow that this may not be varied; and it does not follow that all the variations that have been made between the apostolic age and the Reformation must be thrust aside because they have been "abused under the Pope." The Church must deal with needs and expediencies as they arise, and do the best it can for time and place. This was the cause which, as if conscious of the defects of his own advocacy, Whitgift left to be maintained by the calm eloquence and judicial spirit of Hooker, when, as primate, he encouraged him to write his great work, *Of the Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity*. But before the first instalment* of Hooker's work appeared in print, the main contention of Presbyterianism was challenged on a wholly different ground, in Bancroft's sermon of 1588, to which I have already alluded. The preacher's contention is that the office of the bishop is not only other than that of the presbyter, but that it is of divine right, and of the essence of the Church. This doctrine was novel. Whitgift is said to have admitted that he did not believe it, though he wished he could. Bancroft remained long without a follower. The late Mr. Aubrey Moore dates from this sermon "the *recovery* of the English Church," though, with the inconsistency of perfect candour, he speaks, a line or two further on, of the "new creed inaugurated by Bancroft."† I suppose we owe largely to Bancroft the Stuart doctrine of "No Bishop, no King," and the related fact that the Church of England is the most Episcopal Church in Christendom.

The mention of Bancroft's sermon brings us round again to Francis Johnson and his exiled church, to which he was at last,

* The first four books, published 1594.

† *History of the Reformation*, p. 294.

in 1597, free to minister. We must look, for a moment, at the principle for which these Brownists stood and suffered.

We have seen that, in 1586, five hundred of the Disciplinarian Puritans *within the Church* had come to the conclusion that, after waiting in vain for the "magistrate," it was lawful to act without him, and begin a reformation (or, as it appeared to them, consistently continue *the* Reformation) for themselves. Five or six years before, Robert Browne had arrived at this point, and gone further. He had stood and suffered with the London Puritans as a Nonconformist; now, he was convinced of that doctrine of the duty of absolute separation with which his name is identified. He uttered the challenge to this new departure in a little work entitled, *A Treatise of Reformation without tarying for anie, and of the wickednesse of those Preachers, which will not reforme till the Magistrate commaunde or compell them* (1582). At this date, Browne had already *gathered* a church at Norwich of those who shared his conviction of the necessity of separation from the parish churches, and of laying a new foundation by mutual covenant. Can we wonder that it came to many as a hopeful and inspiring idea?—No more trying to steer between God and Cæsar; no more weighing of conformity or nonconformity; no more scrupling of ceremonies; no more trying to patch up the kingdoms of this world into a Kingdom of Christ; begin afresh; be a Church, ye that are of one heart and of one soul! But it was the fact that the Separatists said "We are *the* Church" that turned so many good men against them with the reproach that they "unchurched Christendom." Browne drew with a firm hand the outline of the ideal Church that seemed so ready for immediate realisation. "A true church is a church planted and gathered, a number of believers who, by a willing covenant, are under the government of God and Christ. . . . Whosoever are not gathered from all false churches, and from their false government, can neither be the Church of God, nor preachers in the same." All ministry

and office belongs to the particular church, and extends to no other; and this because the lordship of Christ (one of the root-ideas, as we have seen, of all Puritanism) is embodied in the particular church;* and this only because the particular church is the very real and concrete combination of those individuals in whom Christ reigns, and, as far as the most anxious human vigilance can ensure, of no others. "Everie one of the church is made a Kinge, a Priest, and a Prophet under Christ. . . . . the Kingdome of all Christians is their office of guiding and ruling with Christ, to subdue the wicked, and to make one another obedient to Christ; their Priesthoode is their office of cleansing and redressing wickednes, whereby sinne and uncleannes is taken away from amongst them. . . . their Prophecie is their office of judging all thinges by the worde of God, whereby they increase in knowledge and wisedome among themselves." In this view, of course, official positions in the church simply mark diversities of administrations; and in church-officers the powers and privileges of every member are rather exemplified than put into commission. "The system," says Dr. Dexter (with some recollection of those words I quoted from Cartwright in his mind, I think), "was an absolute monarchy so diffused in the channels of its working as to become a pure democracy." As the pastoral office exists only in relation to a particular church, and by its free election, only a member of that church is eligible. Hence the congregational usage of admitting a future minister to the membership of the church before he could be appointed to the pastorate; hence, too, the difficulty of a minister who wished to

* "Any company of apparently true believers, separating themselves thus from the corrupt State Church, and rightly associating themselves together, in so doing constitute themselves a true church of Christ, independent of all control but His." Dr. H. M. Dexter (*Congregationalism, as seen in its Literature*; N.Y. 1880, p. 105), a writer to whom every student of this period must acknowledge constant obligation.

take another appointment, but whom his congregation was unwilling to release; it sometimes declared his removal to be a breach of covenant, or grudgingly granted his dismission by declaring "no communion" with him. The officers of the Church are, in the main, the same as those described in the various Schemes of Discipline we have noticed. "The Scriptural ordinary officers" are a pastor, a teacher of doctrine, one or more elders, one or more relievers, and one or more widows. In *The True Description, out of the Word of God, of the Visible Church* (1589), we have deacons and "relievers or widows," who must be women of at least sixty years of age.

Such was the polity of that little church, which fleeing from Norwich, met at Middelburg in 1581 (probably), as it was of the London church to which Francis Johnson was restored in Amsterdam, in 1597. There is no doubt as to the absolute incompatibility of the Brownist basis of the church with any ecclesiastical organisation existing at the time. Separation from the false church and the false ministry,—from the mixed multitude of the parish church, where none knows for certain the spiritual state of another, and tares and wheat may be growing side by side;* where the minister exercises an office not derived from, not solely related to, the particular church to which he ministers—this is fundamental.

I cannot refrain, even at the risk of needless iteration, from contrasting with this view of the Church of England that of contemporary Nonconformists (properly so called) "desiring a further reformation," as exhibited in a letter addressed by Cartwright and others, then prisoners of the High Commission

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* Vavasour Powell appears to have been somewhat singular in feeling an inconsistency between the Gospel of the Kingdom and the doctrine of immediate separation; but he was satisfied "that the words of Christ in Matt. xiii., concerning the tares and the drag-net, were contrary to other scriptures" (*Strenia Vavasoriana*. 1654. p. 5).

Court, to the Queen, in April, 1592. "We acknowledge unfeignedly as in the sight of God, that this our church, as it is by your highness's laws and authority established among us, having that faith professed and taught publicly in it that was agreed of in the convocation holden in the year 1562, and such form of public prayers and administration of the sacraments, as in the first year of your most gracious reign was established (notwithstanding anything that may need to be revised and further reformed), to be a true, visible church of Christ; from the holy communion whereof, by way of schism, it is not lawful to depart." *

To the Separatist, the mark of the false church is, that it is a mixed assembly; that of the true church, that it is "a companie or fellowship of faithful and holie people gathered in the name of Christ Jesus, their only King, Priest, and Prophet . . . . . every stone living, elect, precious."† Browne's starting point is, that the Church of England is in a hopeless state, because there is no power in the particular church to purge itself. "The power of Christ to judge those that are within, and to cut off disorders, it hath not." These prevailing notes of separation and exclusion strike one at once in comparing the Brownist confessions and the Presbyterian schemes of discipline. They acutely mark the abandonment of that Calvinian view which inspired the whole theory of discipline, in which nation and Church, the parish and the particular church, are to be coextensive; in fact, two aspects of the same society. Excommunication seems to be always in the forefront of these Church-constitutions. For, of course, it was vain to "insist on separation from all kirks where excommunication was not rigorously used" (as Caldewood says of Browne), if the separated church did not rigorously purge itself. If only now and then there was necessity for the judicial cutting off of the notoriously evil, there was

* Strype: *Annals*, Vol. IV. Document No. lx., p. 122.

† *A True Description*, &c.

always the duty, involved in the faith of the mutual covenant, of serious scrutiny and faithful reproof of each other's faults. As members one of another, "each was taught," as Dr. Dexter says, "to bear upon his or her conscience every imperfection seen, or imagined to be seen, in others." In the little exiled churches of English in Holland (the only ones, of the kind and period, of which we know anything of the inner life), shut off from the people around them, and with all their eyes turned inward, the results of this overweening sense of responsibility were nothing short of disastrous. It led to that kind of fraternal inquisition which, if it is ever effective in the case of a brother, is apt to look particularly foolish in the case of a sister. More recent history has proved to the laity the difficulty of the effort to regulate the minister's wife. Hence we read that at Middelburg there was "much a doe" about Mrs. Browne; at Amsterdam there was certainly much more ado about Mrs. Johnson.* There was a split in the church at Middelburg, and Browne, in a short time, returned to England; a split at Amsterdam, where half the church separated, with Ainsworth the teacher, from Johnson. He withdrew to Emden, where he died. It is pathetic to see a great idea shipwrecked in the paltry troubles of practical working, largely owing, in this case, to the mistaken conviction that religious interests and spiritual causes can dispense with the courtesy, the forbearance, the reticence, which seem in every age, perhaps happily, to be of the world rather than of the church.

The polity of the Separatist churches, though constant to the fundamental idea of Brownism, was not uniform. It was somewhat modified in the schemes of Barrowe and of Johnson, in a Presbyterian direction; and more largely, by the larger sagacity and wider sympathy of John Robinson, of Leyden, the pastor of

* Yet nothing more serious than a formal complaint that her apparel was "showish." The church sat, judicially, upon her hat.

the Pilgrims,—the one man of the time to give it its most hopeful God-speed as it went to its great destiny in the new world.

Under the primacy of Abbot, the Nonconformist within the Church, largely with the assistance of the corporations of towns, came to a kind of *modus vivendi* with the authorities. His temporary quiet and contentment provoked the angry remonstrance of the Separatist beyond seas, as in John Canne's *Necessity of Separation proved by the Nonconformists' principles* (1634). When Laud broke the truce, the Nonconformists, persecuted in the old style about the surplice and the ceremonies, in large numbers followed the Pilgrims to New England. But little was heard in this country of the old differences between them and the Separatists until the days of the Commonwealth, when the latter began to come back from abroad. Baxter declares that up to 1641, the year of his settling at Kidderminster, "he never thought what Presbytery or Independency were, or ever spoke with a man that seemed to know it." I need not remind you how, under the Commonwealth, the Baxterian scheme of clerical association, with its absolute freedom as to the organisation of particular churches,* supplanted the parliamentary Presbyterianism which had been dictated by Scotland to the Long Parliament, and in which the Scots would not admit any toleration for Independents. But look at the forms of agreement of these associations, and though you will find constant expressions of the desire "to bring in our brethren of the Congregational way," you will find also, among the early resolutions, a significant reminder of that Nonconformity that would never separate: "*Agreed*, that our parish churches are true churches of Christ."†

Even within the short period embraced in our inquiry, how

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* See Rev. Alexander Gordon: *Baxter as a Founder of Liberal Nonconformity;* printed with *Heads of English Unitarian History*, 1895, pp. 63—66.

† Resolution of the General Assembly of Ministers of Devon and Exon., May 27, 1657.

strange are the paradoxes presented to the students of its history! We have seen the party of further reformation, the men most prepared to break with tradition and prescription in the interest of the Church's liberty of self-determination by its own consciousness, binding themselves in the fetters of a rigid scripturalism. We have seen their opponents defending, on rational grounds, the freedom of the Church as a polity against those who would find in Scripture the final commandment as to every detail, unconsciously tying up the Church as a mere appanage of the right divine of kings. If we carried our survey a little further, we might see the Separatist, who has sometimes appeared to us as mainly anxious to walk in a small enclosure where he might never see a church ungathered or a soul unsaved, becoming the champion of general toleration. But again, we should see the man of greatest name as an advocate of Christian liberty, Roger Williams, founding his colony of Rhode Island on the responsibility of each man to God only in the matter of his religious faith and practice—and not merely refusing to minister to an unseparated church, but refusing to join in worship with the congregation in Boston (he would not even take off his hat during the prayers) because its members would not make a public declaration of repentance for having been in communion with the Church of England while they lived in the old country; refusing even to join in prayer, or in grace at table, with his wife, because she had attended the "public assembly."

The thought of a church universal, arching over the strifes and divisions of his day—of a bond of communion found in a common relation to God, settled into a calm passion in the soul of Baxter. A real communion in prayer is to him the prophesy and promise of a wide union of conscious fellowship. Into this he escaped from the controversies of his day; the sense of it kept him unsoured by his own argumentativeness. Let us hear something of his "Cure of Church Divisions":—

"He may be a Christian who is no member of your flock; yea, or of any particular church: but he is no Christian, who is not a member of the Universal Church."*

"Do you not believe that to give a Bill of Divorse to the Universal Church, or to many hundred parts of it, or to any one part, or to declare that they are none of the Church of Christ, is not great arrogancy, and injury to men, and unto Christ himself?"

"Dare you say before God, Let me have no part in any of the prayers of all those Churches on earth who use a liturgy as culpable as ours? because I will have no communion with them? Do you set so light by your part of their prayers?"

"If you travelled or lived in Abassia, Armenia, Greece, or any Christian country (where their worship is not idolatry nor substantially wicked, nor they force not the worshippers to any false oaths, subscriptions, or other actual sin), would you refuse all communion with them, and all public worship of God? or would you not rather join with them, than with no church at all? When we remember on the Lord's days, that now all the Christian world are congregate, and are calling upon God and praising him, in the name of one Christ, and in the profession of one faith, dare you think of being a body separate from them all? and can you think that Christ disowneth them all, save you? Can he cast off and condemn so many hundred parts of the Church Universal, and accept that one part only, which you join with?"†

So striving to pursue his own *Via Media* ("the way of peace to love and humility," he called it), holding the language of comprehension in the days of mutual exclusion, striving to read the church on earth in the light of that "general assembly and church of the first-born" in which he sought his Everlasting Rest, Baxter made, as he says, "a wedge of his bare hand, by putting

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* *Cure of Church Divisions*, 3rd ed. 1670. p. 340.

† *Ibid.* pp. 265-6.

it into the cleft, and both sides closing upon it, to his pain." He speaks to us still, because he did not exchange the burden and testimony of a great principle, generally misunderstood, for a working scheme and a readily defensible brief. May this College, which traces its ancestry to the school of his fellows and followers, still maintain a faith in the Church Universal, still strive, with the clear eye of knowledge and the insight of sympathy, to discern the unity of the Spirit amid the diversities of its operations; and stand fast in that liberty wherewith Christ—and that great army of his faithful witnesses, who though deeming themselves parted from each other, even for eternity, have yet been truly one in the fellowship of his service and suffering—hath made us free!

NOTE A.—(The Plumbers' Hall Prisoners.)

Statements like the following, which I take from Rev. T. W. Davids' very valuable *Annals of Evangelical Nonconformity in the County of Essex*, have been constantly repeated:—"The principles professed by this community, it is now plain, were substantially those of the Congregationalists" (p. 65). It will be sufficiently obvious to my readers that the principles professed by the prisoners were not peculiar to Congregationalists, and that *the* distinctive Congregationalist principle is not expressed or implied in them. I cannot refrain from alluding to a parallel case. Dr. Waddington (*Congregational History* I., p. 472) prints a document, found by himself, signed by "Richarde Fytz, minister" (no date); and if I understand Dr. Waddington aright, he sees in this the assertion of the principle of Separation, and of fellowship "as a Congregational Church." He sees what is not there. The document is entitled, *The Trewe Markes of Christ's Church, etc.*, yet there is no hint of the principle of the *gathered church*. Dr. Dexter says, of Fitz's church, "I fail to find in the simple documents they left behind them evidence that they had elaborated for themselves any system whatsoever;" and of the document just named, "These are good congregational principles as far as they go, but they scarcely more touch the question of pure polity, than the pile driven deep below the foundations of a building suggests whether that is to be Gothic, Grecian, or pure Yankee, in its *façade*." (*Congregationalism as seen in its Literature;* p. 115, and note 204.)

But Mr. Davids continues (*ut supra*): "Their pastor was Richard Fitch (*sic*), and they also had a deacon, Thomas Rowland." This is even to go beyond the language in which Waddington intimates his belief in the identity of the Plumbers' Hall prisoners with Fitz's Church. He prints a manuscript (with no date) which speaks of "our minister Richard Fitz, Thomas Rowland, deacon, one Partryche and Gyles Fouler" as having suffered for their faithful testimony. But none of the twenty-seven names appended to the document are those of the Plumbers' Hall prisoners (though Jane Irelande appears in the list, and James Irelande was among the prisoners). Fitz is not mentioned by the prisoners, or by their judges; and their account of

themselves goes to show that since their parish-ministers had been silenced, they had had no pastor. I can only suppose that the identification is made to rest upon the hypothesis that "Thomas Rowland, deacon," is the same man as Thomas Bowelande, one of the prisoners. I cannot see that any later writer has succeeded in carrying the connection between the Plumbers' Hall conventicle and Fitz's Church any further than Brook's conjecture (*Puritans*. Vol. III. p. 503) that Fitz "became pastor to those people, most probably, some time after this period."

But what were the views as to *a True Church* held by the prisoners? Only one passage, I think, in their replies to examination, deals directly with this question. The speaker is William White, "a substantial citizen of London, whom Fuller by mistake calls a minister" (Brook). "We wilbe tried by the *best reformed churches*. The Church of *Scotland* hath the worde truely preached, the Sacramentes truely ministred, and discipline according to the worde of God; and these be the notes by which the true church is known." (*A parte of a register*, p. 35.) A more explicit negation of the root-ideas of Congregationalism could hardly be packed into the same compass. And the pattern-church is the Church of Scotland, against which Robert Browne testified at Edinburgh—"alledged that the whole discipline of Scotland was amisse; that he and his companie were not subject to it; and therefore he would appeale from the Kirk to the Magistrat." (Calderwood: *Historie of the Kirk of Scotland*. Wodrow Soc., vol. iv., p. 2.)

NOTE B.—(The Wandsworth Presbytery.)

The Wandsworth Presbytery has been the subject of many curious mistakes and misrepresentations, largely through failure to observe its purely parochial character. (The clearest explanation of the exact state of things is to be found in Mr. Drysdale's *History of the Presbyterians in England*, ch. v.) "To erect up their several Presbyteries in their own parishes" was stated to be the object of the Puritan ministers, by a witness examined before the High Commission Court. Mr. Marsden, misled, I presume, by the phrase "erecting a presbytery," supposes that it involves the building of a chapel. "In 1572 a

presbyterian church was formed, and a meeting-house erected, at Wandsworth &c." (*Early Puritans*, p. 62). But it was reserved for Mr. Hore to make a still more extraordinary blunder. Not only does he see "the first organized schism" in the action of men whom no persecution could turn into separatists, but he reads pretended ordination in the title of the Register book. "Eleven Elders entitled the *Orders of Wandsworth* were chosen"! (*History of the Church of England*, p. 312.)

NOTE C.—("The Book of Discipline.")

It seems to be assumed by many historians that there was, from the outset of this controversy, one work called *The Book of Discipline* which the Puritans wished to set up against the Prayer-book; the work of Walter Travers, or of Travers and Cartwright conjointly; which book was subscribed by the five hundred clergy in 1586. (See, for example, Canon Perry's *Student's English Church History*: Second Period. pp. 316, 331).

The book usually attributed to Travers bears the title:—*Ecclesiasticae Disciplinae, et Anglicanae Ecclesiae ab illa aberrationis, plena e verbo Dei et dilucida explicatio.* Rupellae, excudebat Adamus de Monte. M.D.LXXIIII. sm. 8vo. 5 & 147 *leaves.* (No chapters, sections, or subtitles.) A free translation of this work, ascribed to Cartwright, is entitled:—*A full and plaine declaration of ecclesiasticall discipline out off the Word off God, and off the declininge off the Church off England from the same.* Imprinted MD.LXXIIII. [no place]. pp. 8, 193. sm. 4to. Close black-letter.

This book appeared, in both forms (neither, however, bearing any indication of the author), two years after the formation of a parochial presbytery at Wandsworth, in which Travers is said to have taken part; and its object is to commend and defend such presbyterian organisation and discipline of particular churches. It is doctrinally presbyterian as to the parity of ministers, though the function of the bishop is declared to be "to beare as it were that office which the Consull did in the Senate off Rome." As far as I have read, my impression coincides with that of Mr. Hunt, that there is no mention

of the presbyterian government of associated churches; there is no presbytery but the parochial consistory. The scheme goes as far as Wandsworth, but not so far as the Classes or Conferences of 1586. And I cannot believe that this lengthy treatise, which presents no form of articles or digest, was the document then subscribed. Strype and Neal give the form of subscription then used, and note that it is somewhat different from that ("The brethren of the Conference of N &c.") which closes the *Directory* said to have been found in Cartwright's study. It includes, however, a promise to follow the directions set down in the chapter, *Of the office of the Ministers of the Word.* In the *Directory*, there is a section with this heading. In the Travers-Cartwright book there is no division by titles or sections. I think, therefore, that the *Directory* printed in 1644 represents very nearly what was signed in 1586. It is true that the title given by Neal as of "their book," *i.e.*, of the "private Classes," *The holy Discipline*, &c., corresponds to nothing I can find. It may never have been printed; but Bancroft's title, *The Pretended Holy Discipline*, may furnish a reason why it was dropped.

It will have been noticed that both the *Explicatio* and its translation are anonymous. I venture to add, with the Librarian's permission, a MS. note inserted in the Bodleian Catalogue:—

> Tomson (Laurence).
>
> The book "Ecclesiasticae disciplinae . . . . explicatio" Rupellae. 1574, etc. is usually attributed to Walter Travers: but in a copy of the above edition sold at Sotheby's in London (Napier sale) March, 1886, was a note "Laurentius Tompsonus Oxoniensis Theologus doctissimus est hujus libri author, 1574."

Laurence Tomson, of Magdalen College, Oxford, was the translator of Calvin's Sermons (1579) and of Beza's Version and Annotations on the New Testament. (1576 &c). He died 1608. In his earlier life he was much abroad, on diplomatic service. This fact might possibly be connected with the printing of the *Explicatio* at Rochelle. Travers had close relations with Geneva and with Antwerp; and the translation is believed to have been printed at Geneva.

NOTE D.—(Article XX. Of the Authority of the Church.)

1571. "The Church hath power to decree Rites or Ceremonies, and authority in Controversies of Faith; and yet"

1553. "it is not lawful for the Church to ordain anything that is contrary to God's word written, &c."

As to the validity of the first clause, see Hardwick, *History of the Articles*, p. 144, &c. I quote John Selden's opinion:—"There is a question about that Article, Concerning the power of the Church, whether these words [of having Power in Controversies of Faith] were not stoln in, but 'tis most certain they were in the Book of Articles that was Confirm'd, though in some Editions they have been left out; But the Article before tells you, who the Church is, not the Clergy, but *Coetus fidelium*." (*Table Talk:* Church § 5.)

But whence came this clause, which is of the very essence of Anglicanism, and the key-note of its first stage of development in Hooker? Failing to get a more satisfactory answer to the question, I venture to suggest a source. Bishops Cox and Guest were Archbishop Parker's helpers in drafting the Articles in 1563 (especially Guest). Both of them had been among the eight Protestant disputants at the futile Westminster Conference of 1559. The Conference broke up before the second question to be proposed by the Protestants was reached, and it was thus stated:—"That every particular church hath authority to institute, change, and abrogate ceremonies and rites of the Church, so that it be to edification." The arguments prepared in support of this proposition are given in Strype: *Annals*, I. i. 134; and another paper on the same subject, from the Parker MSS. in C. C. C. Cambridge, in *Annals*, I. ii. 466.